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Farm Broadcasters Letter

United States Department of Agriculture Office of Communications Radio-TV Division Washington, DC 20250-1340 (202) 720-4330

Letter No. 2629

September 24, 1993

CROP DISASTER ASSISTANCE -- Secretary of Agriculture Mike Espy says producers whose 1993 crops sustained losses due to weather related disasters may apply for assistance through March 4, 1994. Benefits will be paid no later than June 1994. Payments up to 100 percent of each eligible claim are authorized by emergency disaster legislation signed recently by President Clinton. Eligible producers are those who produce commercially grown program or non-program crops. Producers whose 1993 crops are insured by the Federal Crop Insurance Corporation will be eligible for payments on losses exceeding 35 percent. Producers without such insurance will be eligible for payments on losses greater than 40 percent. Contact: Robert Feist (202) 720-6789.

PESTICIDE PLAN -- A timetable for reducing pesticide use by converting to alternatives such as natural pest control and bioengineering is part of the Administration's proposals on food safety and pesticide regulations presented to a joint hearing of the Senate Committee on Labor and Human Resources and the House Subcommittee on Health and the Environment. Among those testifying were USDA deputy secretary Richard Rominger, EPA administrator Carol Browner, and FDA commissioner David Kessler. The proposals include establishment of a single negligible risk standard for pesticide residues in processed food, replacing the Delaney clause ban on any trace of such chemicals. Contact: Tom Amontree (202) 720-4623.

NAFTA -- Agriculture Secretary Mike Espy told the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry that approval of the North American Free Trade Agreement is essential to the growth of U.S. agriculture. Espy said exports are increasingly important to the economic health of agriculture, and the increased flow of goods under NAFTA will help assure economic growth and jobs for U.S. agriculture. Contact: Steve Kinsella (202) 720-4623.

REGIONAL HUNGER FORUMS -- USDA will conduct three regional hunger forums this winter as a follow-up to the national hunger forum held in Washington, D.C. last June. They will be held in Burlington, VT; McAllen, TX; and Kansas City, MO. Ellen Haas, USDA assistant Secretary for Food and Consumer Services, says the forums will provide an opportunity to hear from people who receive food program services and from those who provide them. Specific sites and dates will be announced later. Contact: Phil Shanholtzer (703) 305-2286.

DISADVANTAGED FARMER OUTREACH -- Secretary of Agriculture Mike Espy has awarded \$1 million in grants to 20 colleges and community-based organizations to develop 5-year plans that provide technical assistance and outreach to disadvantaged family farmers. The assistance will encourage socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers to own and operate farms, participate in agricultural programs, and become an integral part of the agricultural community. Contact: Marlyn Aycock (202) 720-4323.

FOOD STAMP SCAMS -- A Brooklyn, NY businessman has been sentenced to charges of illegally acquiring and redemming over \$40 million in food stamps. The owner of Puello Meats and Provisions was sentenced to 21 months in prison, 3 years probation, and fined \$40,000. A Los Angeles businessman and his wife, owners of David's produce, have been sentenced to 4 years in prison, 3 years probation and ordered to pay \$50,000 in restitution for trafficking in \$20 million in food stamps. Charles Gillum, acting inspector general at USDA, said the guilty pleas stemmed from an investigation by USDA's Office of Inspector General. USDA administers the Food Stamp Program at the federal level. Contact: Tom Martin (202) 720-4401.

MILK ORDER MERGER HEARING -- USDA is inviting dairy farmers, milk dealers, and consumers to testify at a public hearing on proposals to merge federal milk orders in the southern U.S. Charles Brader, acting administrator of USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service, says the November 1 hearing in Atlanta, Georgia will address a proposal submitted by the dominant cooperatives in the southern region. Proponents of the merger contend that a larger order would provide for a more equitable sharing among producers of the higher-valued fluid milk sales in what has become a common milk production and marketing area. Contact: Clarence Steinberg (202) 720-6179.

WHEAT EXPORTS -- U.S. wheat stocks ending in 1993/94 are projected up 33 percent, topping 700 million bushels for the first time in 3 years. Most wheat stocks are privately held, not under a government program. Larger supplies and limited demand will likely push down farm prices to \$3.00 or less, down from \$3.24 a year earlier. Contact: Ed Allen (202) 219-0840.

MEAT PRODUCTION UP -- U.S. meat production is forecast nearly 2 percent higher in calendar year 1993, with slightly larger broiler output this month almost offsetting a drop in red meat. A further gain of around 3.5 percent in meat production is projected for 1994. Contact: Ron Gustafson (202) 219-1286.

ORANGE PRODUCTION -- California naval orange production for 1993-94 is forecast at 38 million boxes, 13 percent below last year's total. The crop is maturing well with large size fruit, but a lighter set than last season. Contact: Diane Bertelsen (202) 219-0884.

REDUCING GROUNDWATER CONTAMINATION -- Placing fertilizers and other agrichemicals on the downwind side of crop rows in ridge tillage farming exposes the inputs to less rainfall, reducing the chance of seepage into groundwater. Studies show that the least rain falls on the leeward ridge shoulder, making it the driest part of the ridge. Depending on wind speed and direction, up to 1.5 inches difference in rainfall can occur on the soil surface. Laying out rows so that prevailing winds cross at a 45 degree angle will make the leeside drier on average, reducing the chemicals leaching into groundwater. Contact: Robert Dowdy (612) 625-7058.

FOOT AND MOUTH VACCINE -- A new experimental vaccine to protect livestock from foot-and-mouth disease has been placed inside another virus by scientists with USDA's Agricultural Research Service. The shell of a bacterium was genetically altered, resulting in a structure that resembles the foot and mouth virus but lacks the element that enables it to infect animals. In preliminary tests it prevented infection of pigs. The vaccine can cut the risk of potential outbreaks in the U.S. Contact: Marvin Grubman (516) 323-2500.

FROM OUR RADIO SERVICE

AGRICULTURE USA #1894 -- Children who have too much time alone at home while their parents work are at risk of getting into trouble. Brenda Curtis reports on an Extension Service program in Nebraska that is dealing with the problem. (Weekly reel -- 13-1/2 minute documentary.)

CONSUMER TIME #1376 -- New food safety/pesticide proposal; the plant explorers; preserving the world's plant species; home alone kids are at risk; fall lawn care. (Weekly reel of 2-1/2 to 3 minute consumer features.)

AGRITAPE NEWS & FEATURES #1886 -- USDA News Highlights; pesticide plan; farmers and NAFTA; smaller returns for tobacco growers; cattle on feed increasing. (Weekly reel of news features.)

NEWS FEATURE FIVE #1639 -- Berry clever idea; better tasting berries; cat virus model; feral hogs; "TGE" a costly hog disease. (Weekly reel of research feature stories.)

UPCOMING ON USDA RADIO NEWSLINE -- Wednesday, September 29, Ag prices; Thursday, September 30, grain stocks, hog/pig numbers; Friday, October 1, trout production, horticultural exports; Tuesday, October 5, crop & weather update, cotton/wool update. These are the USDA reports we know about in advance. Our Newsline carries many stories every day which are not listed in this lineup. Please don't let the lack of a story listing keep you from calling.

USDA RADIO NEWSLINE (202) 488-8358 or 8359. COMREX ENCODED (202) 720-2545.
Material changed at 5 p.m., EDT, each working day.

FROM OUR TELEVISION SERVICE

FEATURES -- Lynn Wyvill reports on sheep farming and small scale agriculture. Will Pemble reports on genetically engineered peanuts at Epcot Center. Dave Luciani reports on dividing perennials, and vegetable garden fall clean-up.

ACTUALITIES -- USDA chief meteorologist Norton Strommen reviews the latest weather influence on crop conditions.

UPCOMING FEATURES -- Pat O'Leary and Will Pemble report on "biodiversity," the theme of this year's World Food Day, October 16. Pat O'Leary reports on Smokey Bear's 50th birthday. Lynn Wyvill reports on removing ink from recycled paper.

EVERY OTHER WEEK -- Agriculture Update with anchors Eric Parsons and Lori Spiczka. 4:30 of USDA farm program information in news desk format with B-roll.

Available on Satellite Galaxy 4, channel 23, audio 6.2 or 6.8, downlink frequency 4160 MHz.: Thursdays from 7:30 - 7:45 p.m., EDT, Saturdays from 10 - 10:30 a.m., EDT, and Mondays from 8 - 8:30 a.m., EDT.

OFFMIKE

WE'VE NEVER BEEN HERE BEFORE...says **Kathy Patton** (Kansas Ag Network, Topeka) about the situation confronting farmers in much of the upper Midwest. She says a roller coaster of emotions has resulted. 1993 will be a year for the history books. Fields are so wet that many producers with a wheat crop to harvest have had combines stuck in the field for days. Kathy says rust has developed in the corn crop, caused by cloudy days and wetness, dropping some yields down to 35 bushels/acre. Producers with cattle or hog operations are enjoying good prices.

CORN AND BEANS...are looking good. The corn is dented and beans are dropping their leaves, says **Bill Mason** (WGEL, Greenville, IL). Producers who have double-cropped beans are fearful of frost. Bill says there has been extensive flood damage to farms and nearly one million acres were flooded in the state. Farm houses and buildings were torn from their foundations and completely washed away. Bill says the station gave live coverage to the ag waste management conference in Carlyle.

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Radio-TV Division
U.S. Department of Agriculture
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STUNTED CORN AND WHEAT...is being chopped or plowed under, says **Tony Randall** (KXRB/KKLS, Sioux Falls, SD), so that producers can enter the O-92 program. An early frost has hit soybeans, likely taking 5 bushels/acre off yields. Wheat harvest is two weeks away.

CATTLE PRODUCERS...in Louisiana have approved an additional \$.50 a head checkoff to fund promotion and research in the state, says **Don Molino** (Louisiana Agri-News Network, Baton Rouge). Don says Louisiana is the first in the nation to have the additional checkoff approved.

WE'RE WATCHING...GATT, NAFTA and health care reform stories, says **Bill Ray** (Agrinet Farm Radio Network, Elizabeth City, NC). Bill says producers are expressing concern about the possible costs to small businesses of health care reform.

UPDATING...farm programming is underway at KSRV, Ontario, OR. **Russell Strawn** is the station's new News Director. He's looking for material.

VIC POWELL *Vic Powell*
Chief, Radio & TV Division